

Engaging with Media

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End Childhood Sexual Violence

Introduction

Engaging with media can amplify your organization's voice and mission.

This presentation will guide you through best practices to navigate media inquiries safely and effectively.

What is a Media Inquiry?

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Any request for information, comments, interviews, or insights.

These inquiries are typically directed towards the organization's spokesperson, communications team, or executive leadership.

The purpose behind these inquiries can range widely, including but not limited to:

- **Gathering Information:** Journalists or reporters may seek specific details about the nonprofit's activities, missions, outcomes, or plans for future projects.
- **Expert Insights:** Media professionals might request expert opinions or analysis from the nonprofit on issues related to their field of work, aiming to add depth and expertise to their stories.
- **Event Coverage:** Inquiries might be made about upcoming events, initiatives, or campaigns organized by the nonprofit, seeking details for broader dissemination to the public.
- **Response to Current Events:** If the nonprofit's area of focus is connected to trending news items or public debates, media might seek their reaction or stance on these issues.
- **Human Interest Stories:** Sometimes, the interest is in the personal stories within the nonprofit – be it about its beneficiaries, volunteers, or founders – that highlight human experiences and achievements.

Where do media inquiries come from?

Any media outlet can provide an inquiry. This may include traditional media outlets and digital outlets.

Three common examples include:

Print

Newspapers, magazines, and other physical media provide readers with long-form content.

Television & Radio

Both television and radio provide a variety of structures for their viewers or listeners to consume.

Podcasts & News Sites

Digital media outlets are highly segmented and are typically accessed by smartphone.

Key Considerations

It is important to understand the potential risks of media inquiries. When engaging with media, have processes in place to:

- **Ensure team and survivor safety:**
Prepare your team for the possibility of unwanted public exposure.
- **Protect the organization's reputation:**
Recognize that the media is not always on your side.
- **Leverage the moment:**
Respond clearly and promote your message for successful outcomes

Should my organisation Respond?

Should I Respond to a Media Inquiry?

Choice: You ALWAYS have the choice to engage or not.

Self-Care: Prioritize the well-being of yourself and your organization before responding.

1. Notify organizational members.
2. Check if others received a similar request.
3. Decide if the request aligns with your mission, vision, and values.
4. Assess capacity and expertise.
5. Gather detailed information from the media outlet.
6. Always get the questions in writing.
7. Conduct a due diligence check

Confirming Response Readiness

Confirm your organization's requirements for officially responding.

Permission to Proceed

Are votes by leadership or the Communications team needed? If so, how many?

Plan for Absence

How do you respond if a decision-maker at your organisation is on leave?

High Priority/Risk

If it's a high priority/risk, then you may need to contact someone else from within organisation.

Challenging the Media Outlet

You may not like how a media outlet engages you.

They may be hostile, misleading, or lack a trauma-informed approach.

That is okay.

You have the right to challenge their inquiries.

(in a worst case scenario, you can also choose not to respond)

Challenging the Media Outlet

Feel empowered to challenge media inquiries or ask questions of your own.

Challenge material, not individuals.

Communicate in writing.

Right to respond and hold your ground.

If published, you can claim you challenged them.

How do I Respond?

How should I respond to a media inquiry?

- Choose the owner of the response: Either the person who first flags the inquiry, or another nominated person.
- Coordinate with team members: Circulate questions or question areas with your organization's team members and/or relevant parties
- Prepare your response.....

Prepare Your Response

Less is more. Keep responses short so they have no option but to use exactly what you tell them. Repetition is good as well. Always document your responses and notify relevant parties.

Written

Focus on narrative frame and key messaging.
Deliver YOUR organisation's message, even if that means you are not directly answering the question(s) being asked.

Broadcast

Identify spokesperson and provide pre-brief support. Use short talking points and focus the conversation or interview toward your message.

Lines to Take (LTTs)

Lines to take (LTTs) are prepared statements or key points that an organization or individual uses to maintain consistent and coherent messaging.

They are often used in public relations, communications strategies, and media interactions to ensure that everyone in the organization is aligned and communicates the same core messages.

Responding to Hostile Questions

Deal with challenging questions effectively

- Challenge framing, timeline, code of conduct.
- Use Lines to Take (LTTs) from a pre-approved database.
- Keep responses short and to the point.

Prepare Your Organization

There are ways that you can prepare your organisation for future media inquiries. Survivor organisations of any size can position yourselves for success

Build a cohort of trained spokespeople.

Coordinate within partnerships or coalitions.

Review the media landscape weekly

Create a process for pre-empting negative press.

Engaging Survivor Spokespeople

Know the risks

→ **Potential re-traumatisation:**

The very experience of sharing one's experience can be triggering.

→ **Exposure to Harrassment:**

Survivors may experience harassment both online and offline.

→ **Reputational and legal attacks:**

Survivors may experience affronts to their character and potentially be sued.

Prepare survivors.

Provide trainings and preparation time ahead of any media engagement to inform survivor spokespeople of the various risks and the recommendations to engage.

A solid blue rounded rectangle with the text "The Risks" centered in white.

The Risks

A solid pink rounded rectangle with the text "The Recommendations" centered in white.

The Recommendations

Your organisation has an obligation to adequately prepare everyone involved in an interview with a survivor.

Media Training

Spokespeople should go through a media relations training session, guided by a communications expert.

This will empower survivors to engage with the press in a professional capacity.

**Understanding
“on the record /
off the record”**

**Recognizing bad
faith questions**

**Learning tactics
to circumvent
hostile interview
techniques**

**Reviewing
organizational
redlines**

Show full support.

Whenever possible, survivor spokespeople speaking formally on behalf of the organization should receive support while engaging with the media.

Media Relations Specialist

to provide professional support and intervention, particularly to flag and redirect when a journalist crosses a line

Trauma Specialist

to ensure mental wellness and safety, to stay aware of sensitivities and signs of triggering/activation, and to avoid, de-escalate and minimise harm

Slow down the process.

**Just because the media moves quickly
doesn't mean you have to.**

Set up clear decision-making processes that enable you to vet opportunities and consider the risks.

If appropriate, you can create a “fast track” approach to respond to media inquiries in real-time.

Recap of Key Points

- **Engaging with Media:** Amplify your organization's voice and mission by understanding both the opportunities and risks involved.
- **Response Strategies:** Evaluate media inquiries based on your mission, capacity, and outlet credibility. Conduct thorough due diligence before responding.
- **Proactive Preparation:** Regularly review the media landscape to anticipate opportunities and risks. Pre-empt negative press with prepared press releases and coordinated social media efforts.
- **Challenging Inquiries:** Empower yourself to challenge media inquiries, ensuring your organization's narrative is accurately represented. Always communicate in writing.
- **Supporting Spokespeople:** Train and prepare survivor spokespeople with media training, key messaging (LTTs), and support from media professionals and trauma specialists.

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